

Establishing a Culture of Coaching – Building Blocks to the BDA

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Establishing Credibility

Collins Type I. In a minimum of 5 lines, please respond to the following prompt:

Why you? Why were you hired by your district to be an instructional coach?



Assuming a Leadership Role

Pre-Video Analysis

I do not consider myself a leader

Leadership Role

I am part of the team that sets the educational vision for my building



Reasons:

Post-Video Analysis

I do not consider myself a leader

Leadership Role

I am part of the team that sets the educational vision for my building



Reasons:

Building Relationships

Text rendering: As you read, capture one **Sentence**, one **Word** and one **phrase** that resonate with you. Be sure to identify *three unique ideas* instead of choosing a word that is nestled in the phrase or a phrase that is contained within the sentence you choose. We'll do a "whip around" style performance poem with your choices when everyone has finished reading the blog.

Difficult Conversations

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One of the things I'm enjoying most about being on our coaching team here at ISB is the opportunity to openly share our challenges so that we can all work together to improve our practice. This week we had our first book club meeting to discuss the first chapter of *Coaching: Approaches and Perspectives* edited by Jim Knight.

The section of the book that we ended up focusing on the most was about Coaching Heavy and Coaching Light. The author of this chapter, Joellen Killion,

assert[s] that there are two kinds of coaching – coaching *light* and coaching *heavy*. The difference essentially is the coaches' perspective, beliefs, role decisions, and goals, rather than what coaches do... Coaching light occurs when coaches want to build and maintain relationships *more* than they want to improve teaching and learning. From this perspective, coaches act to increase their perceived value to teachers by providing resources *and* avoiding challenging conversations. (p. 22)

Coaching heavy, on the other hand, includes high-stakes interactions between coaches and teachers, such as curriculum analysis, data analysis, instruction, assessment, and personal and professional beliefs and how they influence practice... Coaching heavy requires coaches to say "no" to trivial requests for support and to turn their attention to those high-leverage services that have the greatest potential for teaching and learning. Coaching heavy requires coaches to work with *all* teachers in a school, not just those who volunteer for coaching services. Coaching heavy requires coaches to seek and use data about their work and regularly analyze their decisions about time allocation, services and impact. (p. 23 -24)

Reading this section I realized that often times I am coaching light, but not always because of a decision I've consciously made. I am hyper-aware of the anxiety level most teachers have when dealing with technology, which often results in focusing more on making teachers comfortable with the tools than initiating difficult conversations about changing practice. I wonder if this issue is specific to those of us working in the technology area, or if it's really just the same as coaches helping to implement a new math, reading or science program?

I do believe that those difficult conversations are much easier once you've developed a trusting relationship and that only happens when teachers feel supported. Killion mentions that it often takes coaches a whole year to move from coaching light to coaching heavy because of all the ground-work required to build trusting relationships, but that they can also get trapped into coaching light indefinitely if they are not careful.

I'm wondering now, how can coaches tell when it's time to move from coaching light to coaching heavy? I'm also conscious of the fact that those deeper conversations don't always have to happen in a formal setting, they can be quick snippets in the hallway that build upon previous sessions or discussions over lunch or even in a social setting.

The other issue that jumped out at me was that coaches are required and expected to work with *all* teachers. This directly contradicts my long-held belief in working with the willing. Perhaps I simply need to adjust that to: we should *start* with the willing, but know that eventually we do have to work with everyone. I do still firmly believe that to work with everyone, with the focus on improving student learning (which may entail changing teaching practice), requires clear and transparent communication from administrators about our roles and purpose.

<http://kimcofino.com/blog/2009/09/06/difficult-conversations>

ideas, questions, comments